

DOUG GILBERT

I saw fire



REFLECTIONS
ON RIOTS, REVOLT

and

THE BLACK BLOC

FOREWORD BY CONNIE ANDERSON

I SAW FIRE
REFLECTIONS ON R I O T S , R E V O L T
and THE BLACK BLO C
BY DOUG GILBERT

“You have to be logical, you know?
If I know that in this hotel room, they have food every day, and
I'm knocking on the door every day to eat, and they open the
door, let me see the party, let me see them throwing salami all
over, I mean, just throwing food around, but they're telling me
there's no food.
Every day, I'm standing outside, trying to sing my way in:
We are hungry, please let us in.
We are hungry, please let us in.
After about a week that song,
is gonna change to:
We hungry, we need some food.
After two, three weeks, it's like:
Give me the food or I'm breaking down the door.
After a year you're just like:
I'm picking the lock, coming through the door blasting!
It's like, you hungry,
you reached your level.
We asked ten years ago.
We was asking with the Panthers.
We was asking with them, the Civil Rights Movement.
We was asking.
Those people that asked are dead and in jail.
So now what do you think we're gonna do?
Ask?”

TUPAC AMARU SHAKUR

FOREWORD

To truly tell a story is to
paint a picture. To make the colors
so vivid that readers and listeners can't help
but feel invested in the palette of its world.
It can be an alternate universe arising from
a myth meant to explain this one, or a
moment in time depicted by a single person
sharing with us the smells and sounds of
living through a particular experience.
Journeying with another leads us to being
changed in some way, as the mind opens up
to make room for something beyond what is
in front of one's eyes. And the story—this
almost spiritual enunciation with its unique
ability to transport the mind—adds a new
texture to the realm of reality. This texture

is the stuff that wistful memories are made of; it has the magic-realism of dreams and makes even the dreary feel beautiful. It takes an account or a fantasy or an idea and breathes into these an otherworldly force. Its history is deeply embedded in our own and yet we dispose of it more and more in our daily lives. No time, no energy, nothing to say except what is necessary. But the glowing ochre that weeps its way through the window before dusk is necessary; the scent of earth on a tomato just off the vine and the sad birds singing the neighborhood awake are just as important as any timeline of events that transpire before us. The way our hearts sag or rise at the end of the day is fundamental to the narrative of our lives. When these elements are forgotten or left behind we are emptied of the magic in living.

The art of storytelling drifts slowly away, disintegrating into a horizon that no longer looks familiar. Our words exist in a society growing evermore impatient, continuously reducing experiences to fragments small enough to fit on the latest hand-held device. There is little time for mythical narratives created outside of capital-producing entertainment; this spirit has been replaced by the need for spectacular and instant gratification. Even in the discourse we create ourselves there is a sense of urgency, an almost compulsive attempt to connect the dots—to figure it all out—and there is so much that gets lost in this rabid quest for answers. It is a reaching into imagination, into the terrain of some protagonist's wandering that escapes the present so drastically. And yet, *I Saw Fire*, grasps this dying form of the story and finds itself triumphant in an almost forgotten landscape.

The compilation of texts you are about to read will take you on a journey that leads into the streets of Phoenix during multiple battles against the National Socialist Movement, through the encampments and riots of Occupy Oakland, and into the emotional existence of being an anarchist.

You will put on a black mask and defend its honor against many opposing forces; you will be a worker, combatant, friend. You will feel what the author felt as he lived these events, never being deprived of the many layers that made each moment singular along the way. This is no ordinary book for contemporary times; it doesn't shy away from personal narrative nor simply create a memoir of circumstances. Every bit of analysis has the warmth of a body behind it, the history of struggle lifting it up with passion and purpose inviting readers into a world of fighting with humor and sincerity. Like a conversation late into the night—drunk on banter and contemplation—I Saw Fire will keep you captivated until its last sentence. Doug's relentless prodding will have you laughing your ass off, as antagonists ranging from the police, an unsettling mural, and the Left are all deflated by our protagonist's abhorrence. And we are the protagonists in these pages as well. We are an undeniable part of this world that has been painted and hurled before our eyes; it is a sort of mirror that shows more than just our masked faces. It reveals the terrible essence of the society we scheme against, the fuel inside our hearts propelling us onward, and the special moments in time when fear becomes secondary and we strike back with vehemence that knows no apologies.

It is with joyful excitement that I send you off on this quest, enchanted by the thought of violence in quiet little Santa Cruz and into the University, as our protagonist looks to seize the resources such a deplorable facility clutches selfishly. You will be transported to the Oakland General Strike, tasting tear gas in the streets and feeling more alive than ever before. Whether this is your first time visiting these scenes or you are an experienced traveler here, you will find new sights and new insights. No matter where you come from or why you're here, now is the time to put your sweatpants on, make a cup of tea or grab a beer, and get ready for the ride. 'Cuz it's goin down.

LIES THE MOVEMENT TOLD ME
STANDING IN THE PARKING LOT of
my union hall for bus drivers in the
California East Bay Area, located in East
Oakland, I'm stuck in the middle of several
women and men screaming at each other.

Tempers are flaring, people are cursing and pointing fingers, and I'm at a loss for words. The Pinkertons haven't returned, an angry mob isn't trying to break down the doors and take over the union, and we aren't fighting the cops, the bosses, or (what's really needed), the union bureaucrats. The reason for all this commotion? Quite simply, a BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit, the subway system that takes people across the Bay Area) worker has arrived at the union hall to hand out flyers calling for solidarity between BART workers and bus drivers. The union officials are angry. "Who are you?" they ask. From around the corner of the parking lot, the union president appears. "You need to get the fuck off the property!" she yells at the BART worker. He's flustered, but holds his ground.

There's just one problem, we're all in the same union. "I'm in the same union you are!" the worker responds. He's right. BART workers and bus drivers for the company I work for are all part of the same labor union. But that's not the issue. The issue is not who he is, or what union he's in. The issue is that he's passing out flyers and talking with people about bus drivers and BART workers engaging in united action. He's talking about wildcat strikes. He's talking about shutting down the Bay Area. This is only several weeks after my fellow bus drivers picketed a contract vote at our own union hall. Many were angry that we did not go on strike with BART who struck about a month ago. Needless to say, the union leaders are scared. "I'm calling the police" states our union president, as she walks inside. When BART workers went on strike in the summer and fall of 2013, it cost the Bay Area bosses close to \$73 million a day in lost worker productivity. Talking amongst each other, transit workers discussed how we had a historic opportunity. If we went on strike together, we could grind the entire Bay Area to a halt. We could bring the bosses to their knees and force them to meet our demands by refusing to do the jobs that so many others depended on. Bus drivers had seen their wages frozen and benefits ground down for many years and BART workers faced similar attacks. But as 2013 came to

a close, the transit general strike had yet to happen. The union refused to take us out on strike, even though the bus drivers voted for one by 97%. Flyers circulated calling for a wildcat strike, and many bus drivers called in sick during the first BART strike, but an official, union sanctioned action, never happened.

To many workers, the task ahead seemed clear: to unite with other people in a similar situation and to refuse to engage in the kind of activity that we do every-day—our jobs. To the government, the path ahead was also clear as they saw the threat to business interests. They moved to put a two month strike freeze on both BART and bus drivers. The media, owned by companies that stood to lose millions from transit strikes, called for blood, labeling blue-collar workers greedy extremists. Many within the government began to talk about banning transit strikes altogether. The union heads were also clear: their side was with the government. Union officials voiced support for a cooling-off period and stated in the media that they had no idea why their members had turned down such “good” contracts. The elite—the government, the media, and the union apparatus—were decidedly united: against us.

TWO TALES OF ONE CITY

At the same time as this was all unfolding, another struggle was boiling in the streets of Oakland. On a normal hot summer day, I was driving a bus as the radio suddenly crackled to life with a dispatcher demanding my attention. “The protesters are on the move! They are at 14th and Broadway, heading in large groups through the streets. Please use caution and watch yourselves!,” the voice instructed me. This was right after George Zimmerman had been found not guilty by a jury in Florida for the murder of a young African-American youth, Trayvon Martin. In Oakland, as across the United States, on the night of the verdict protests sprang up against the decision. For several nights, Oakland exploded. The storefronts of many businesses were destroyed, police cars were damaged and vandalized with slogans, roads and even freeways were blocked, and people held the streets in angry marches. Marching through West Oakland, the militants—made up of black, brown, and white demonstrators—were received by those on the streets and housing projects with applause and support. While the riots and uprisings were happening, I was working. As the weeks passed, I drove a bus down the same streets that had been the scene of the riots. Windows remained boarded up, as if to prepare for the next uprising. The word

“Trayvon” was still etched onto the walls, just as they were into the memories of so many people that came into the streets for a young man that they had never met. But the riots only lasted several days, and after being allowed to run their course the police came in, made sweeps, arrested several militants, 1 and began to clamp down. The forces that sought to clear the streets after several nights of riots were not unlike the forces that sought to control the workers’ ability to struggle. The police baton and the union bureaucrat have more in common than not. 2 Struggles, regardless of where they break out, face similar problems. We face a system of counter-insurgency and state surveillance 3 on one hand, and an apparatus of bureaucratic power that is the “official” organizations on the other.

The revolts in the wake of the Trayvon decision were organic and organized at the grassroots level, largely through social networks and social media. But while the initial rage at the verdict propelled many into the streets, after that anger dissipated, the revolt was over. The State’s forces were also keen enough to contain and allow the riots to run their course, knowing from past experiences that attacking a small disruption might lead to a larger one. 4 The situation at my workplace was much different, as people looked to the official organization, the union—whether they agreed with it or not—before making their move. Bus drivers and BART workers have few ways of communicating with each other; we have no way of holding mass meetings unless we organize them on our own, and after decades of inaction and purposely being broken down, lied to, and disorganized by the union, many have forgotten how. Many believe it is simply a problem of leadership—we just have to get a better leader in place. Those who rioted, however, had no official organizations in place to manage and contain them. However, for both the rioters and transit workers, the desire to disrupt and to strike was the same desire. As the authors Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward wrote in the book *Poor People’s Movements: Why They Succeed and How They Fail*, “Indeed, some of the poor are sometimes so isolated from significant institutional participation that the only contribution they can withhold is that of quiescence in civil life: they can riot.” (Vintage Books, 1977, 25).

But if a revolt that can carry us not only into the streets but also give us the ability to remake the world for ourselves is blocked by not only formal organizations and the State, how do revolutionaries navigate in this terrain? Throughout this book we ask these questions. Over and over again, we run up against the same walls and into the

same problems. From riots against police brutality and murder to the Occupy movement, questions of violence, organization, and what kind of world we really do want remain with us and as constant tensions within social struggles. I hope this collection will be the start of conversations that bring some insight to these provocations and capture in time various moments of conflict as well as the struggles within them. As Malcolm X once said, “Of all our studies, history is best qualified to reward our research.”

WAKE UP, FIND EACH OTHER

Across the world in the last several years, people headed to town squares—and stayed there in the thousands. In Mexico, in Israel, in New York City, in Spain, and in Egypt. Like these revolts, future uprisings will not come from the official organizations, but from the bottom up. The coming clash will not simply look like millions of men in overalls streaming out of a factory onto the picket lines; social struggles and revolt will continue to look like much like the Occupy movement did. In the battles to come, people will continue to come together en masse, take space, and find each other. Occupy gave many of us a reason to do this, just as other mass public occupations did across the globe. In these moments, we find a common humanity, a common project, and create the possibility for collective action.

It is the coming together of everyday people that the State fears most. Each of the Occupy-era revolts show the true relationship between the people and the State. It took only a few month’s time for the Obama administration and the Department of Homeland Security to evict the Occupy camps due to the threat they represented. Just as in Egypt, Brazil, and across the world, when faced with government repression we often did not see the growth of a specialized group of armed militants take up arms against the State; instead we saw the proliferation of generalized mass defense of these struggles and occupied public spaces through rioting. Is it no wonder then that the central boogie-man in the current period of struggles is thus the “black bloc 7 anarchist,” an anonymous and self-organized element that is both collective and combative.

We also saw how each of the Occupy-era revolts came to see each other as part of a larger narrative. Workers in Wisconsin carried signs making reference to Egypt as they occupied the Capitol building, just as youths in Cairo donned masks and became black bloc to fight the police and “defend the revolution” after being influenced by anarchists in Greece and elsewhere. 8 In this period, the gen-

eral assembly and the affinity group replaced the Party and the Union as the mode of organization, just as the ski-mask, the soup-kitchen, and the rock replaced the AK-47 as the means of militant struggle.

As the memory of the camps and occupied town squares now fades, we have the opportunity to look back and think carefully on the events of 2011 and 2012. We must remember that Occupy was different simply because it was different. 9 In the US, by and large, Occupy rejected representational and top-down forms of organization and decision making. Instead, it organized itself through general assemblies and horizontal networks and groups. Occupy did not make demands, it raised questions. It did not ask for the right to space, it took it. People got off their computers and away from their phones and engaged in a social project with one another. The political ceased to be a democratic spectacle and instead became something that people had control over and an engagement with. Now, thousands of people have had the experience of working together and making decisions collectively, of knowing what it is like to be part of a human community that is under attack from the State. This will mean something in the battles that lay ahead.

M Y T H S O F T H E P A S T

While the Occupy-era explosions of 2011 were the most important social phenomenon to come about in the last 30 years, in the US it still did little to break through the myths of the Left that grew out of the Great Depression and the Civil Rights Movement. It is these myths, centered around violence, disruption, and their role in social movements that make up much of the tensions discussed in this book. Being that this text is aimed largely at those who have come into politics for the first time through Occupy, I feel that it is necessary to revisit this history. The official organizations that seek to manage, contain, and control social struggles, cling to the fallacies of the past. Simply stated, the myths haunting us in a post-Occupy world revolve around the idea that only formalized groups create change and that violence—often defined as any disruptive action coming outside of formalized groups—alienates the public, hinders progress, and brings on repression from the State. 10 By formal groups, I speak to organizations that have a leadership structure that can engage with the government, have an ability to legally function within politics (like political parties) and within the economy (like unions and non-profit organizations). Formalized organizations are counter-posed to self-organized forms, although most

formalized groups were borne out of struggles in the past or are created in the wake of a revolt as a means to contain it. 11 By informal groups, I refer to worker controlled associations 12 and strikes; those who squat land, housing, entire neighborhoods; communities that organize to stop police violence; an assembly in a community, workplace, or neighborhood convened to organize direct action or address problems; students who organize themselves to take action at their schools, and so on. 13

As Piven and Cloward stated, “First, it was not formal organizations but mass defiance that won in the 1930s and 1960s.” (xv). In these periods, organizations from the AFL-CIO to the NAACP, all attempted to pacify the very rage that gave them the ability to get concessions from the elites. As Piven and Cloward write: “[T]he bureaucratic organizations that were developed within these movements tended to blunt the militancy that was the fundamental source of such influence as the movements exerted.” (xv). Defiance springs from material conditions but formalized groups, however, have always sought to dull the actions of those involved and dampen the fires of revolt.

Many within the Left point to the era of the Great Depression as a time when the official organizations within the working class forced great concessions from the ruling elites. One morning while I was driving to work and listening to the East Bay Left/liberal radio station KPFA, a historian described this period as a process of labor unions using the threat of the growing power of the Communist Party to gain the right to strike and collectively bargain. 15 Thus, the view of history presented to us from the Left is one based on the idea that change comes about by official organizations pressuring traditional structures. But reality is much different. The rise in unionization came largely out of the massive sit-down strikes, occupations, and wildcat strikes in the early 1930s. 16 But, as unions became legal, they came slowly to be seen as a useful part of the capitalist system in controlling workers’ anger, and began to act more and more as a police force. Union leaders were able to weed out radicals from leadership positions, workers were no longer allowed control over struggles and strikes, and rebellious wage earners were driven off of job sites. At the same time, labor began a strategy of courting the Democratic Party with the millions of dollars collected from workers’ dues. In return, bureaucrats hoped for concessions and labor-friendly laws (or at least laws friendly to unions). 17 But as this was carried out, unionization also declined. Wages began to fall or stagnate. Workers were again placed into craft

unions and broken apart by trade and race and were again encouraged to make deals with management and curtail strikes. Although US workers have continued to rise up, sometimes in massive numbers (for example, the strike wave of the post-WW II period and again in the Vietnam era in response to the speeds up in factories), at every turn the unions sought to control them. The State also responded to struggle, for instance after the Oakland general strike of 1946, the government passed laws (Taft-Hartley) making solidarity strikes (and thus general strikes) illegal. Now, breaking Taft-Hartley by one union to go out with another is seen as out of the question for almost all union leaders, when it was mass defiance and law-breaking which created them in the first place. In the current period, many states are now attacking the rights of unions to collectively bargain. This saw itself play out most dramatically in the Wisconsin capitol, where in the midst of an occupation by thousands of workers, Democratic leaders tried to control and contain the struggle. Across the country, wages have gone down, people are working more than ever before, and unions, where they do exist, are by and large only concerned with continuing to collect dues. The legalistic and electoral strategy of labor to work within capital has been a history of almost 100 years of failure for the working class. People work more for less pay, and are further than ever from the abolition of capitalism. Any new worker struggles that break out now will not only have to go up against the bosses and their police, but also against the union leadership itself. The myth of both Party and Union bringing the working class into a new period is a lie. It was the working class itself, through it's own struggles that created the very organizations which now seek to contain it.

For other sections of the poor and working class, many of whom do not work in unionized industries and are more likely to be trapped within the prison-industrial complex (largely people of color in the United States), have also seen their struggles evolve in a similar vein. In *Smash Pacifism*, indigenious-anarchist writer Zig Zag commented on non-violence as promoted by official organizations: "Pacifist ideologues promote [their] version of history because it reinforces their ideology of nonviolence, and therefore their control over social movements, based on the alleged moral, political, and tactical superiority of nonviolence as a form of struggle. The State and ruling class promote this version of history because they prefer to see pacifist movements, which can be seen in the official celebrations of Gandhi (in India) and King (in the US). They prefer pacifist movements because they are reform-

ist by nature, offer greater opportunities for collaboration and co-optation, and are more easily controlled.” (Warrior Publications, 2012, 4).

According to Zig Zag, as with the labor movement of the early 1960s, it was disruption and mass revolt that forced the State to enact reforms and also at the same time, to begin working more closely with people like Martin Luther King, Jr., who were seen as more manageable. Again, from Smash Pacifism: “By 1962, there was growing militancy among Blacks in the South. Many Blacks, including even members of the main pacifist civil rights groups, were armed. This growing militancy erupted in May 1963, with the Birmingham riots. The rioting and protests spread to other cities and states, and the US government moved to quickly enact greater constitutional reforms. Even as the civil rights campaign achieved its greatest victory in 1964, with the passing of the Civil Rights Act, the level of Black militancy and rebellion only increased until it was repressed by a dual counter-insurgency strategy of co-optation and deadly force.” (39).

The White House, headed by John F. Kennedy, even worked closely with King, such as in the famous 1963 March on Washington. 18 The rally was orchestrated and scripted so well by the authorities that Malcolm X, who was barred from speaking, dubbed it the “Farce on Washington” and criticized the event in his famous speech “Message to the Grassroots.” The event was large, but the government went so far as to produce signs for people and edit and censor the speeches made by speakers. 19 As the 1960s wore on, large scale unrest and rioting often became the linchpin that brought government to the table, (as in the case with the riots in Birmingham, Alabama) with the Kennedy and later Johnson administration putting pressure on southern state leaders to comply and negotiate and also pressure Congress to pass civil-rights legislation. But by the mid-1960s, as riots ripped through Watts and elsewhere, the government was also keen on clearing the streets. As Zig Zag notes: “Due to the summer riots..., the federal government and corporations began directing millions of dollars in funding towards programs for employment and housing (all under the ‘War on Poverty’). Some of the main recipients were the reformist civil rights groups.” (55). Like the non-profits of today, some civil-rights groups came to be seen as a set of social managers that could turn large sections of the black masses away from potential insurgency. By 1966, Stokely Carmichael would raise the cry of “Black Power!” and write off much of the reformist oriented civil-rights movement. As Stokely wrote on pacifism, “...it has never

been able to involve the black proletariat...” 20 While King would brush off the idea that riots and mass insurgency aided the passing of civil-rights legislation, 21 “...this is clearly disingenuous, however: the Birmingham riots and subsequent uprisings were the major catalyst for government constitutional reform (i.e., the 1964 Civil Rights Act) 22 along with massive government funding via the ‘War on Poverty,’ direct[ed] primarily at Blacks in urban ghettos—the base of the riots (and from which the SCLC and other groups profited). Ironically, it was the nonviolent protests that had achieved little more than “improving the food in prison,” while the people remained securely oppressed.” (Zig Zag, 67).

Since the Civil Rights struggles, much of the basis of what the movement sought to change has remained the same or gotten worse. As Michelle Alexander has pointed out in the book, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, more African-Americans are incarcerated, on probation, or on parole than were enslaved during slavery. Native Americans have the highest rate of incarceration, and blacks and Latinos still have higher rates of health issues, poverty, drop-out rates, and foreclosure than whites. Latino workers still labor in slave like conditions, often unable to unionize and live in fear of deportation. Schools now are more segregated than before *Brown vs. Board*. In short, as the current rebellions after the murder of Trayvon show, America is still in the middle of its racial nightmare.

Thus, the two of the largest movements for systemic change in the US: organized Labor and Civil-Rights, which are held up as the two shining examples of success, are a distorted history. While some historians include individuals and groups left out of the official text books (such as the Industrial Workers of the World or the Black Panthers), the song remains the same. Formal groups make changes by pressuring and petitioning government, sometimes backed up by masses of people who are controlled and managed by the organizations that speak for them. But at every point in American history, the reality is that changes are made by mass collective action that spurs the State to grant concessions as a way of containing unrest.

BREAKING THE CYCLE

Revolutionaries often have a bad habit of portraying resistance like a sexual experience. Some see, or at least give lip-service to acts of sabotage or collective refusal pointing towards a certain climax. History, if it shows us anything, tells us that class-struggle is as much a part of capitalism as are wages or property. Students occupy a

university and then the developers construct new buildings making it harder for future students to do so. People gather in a downtown square to demonstrate and the City Council puts in cameras and more police. Workers barricade the streets and then the government makes smaller roads. For the elites, the question is not if class struggle will break out. They know that there will be unrest, riots, protests, and strikes from time to time. They know better than anyone that these things will happen because capitalism will always lead to crisis and the inequality that it spawns will draw protest and anger. For them the question is simple: they just want to keep winning the class war—to “manage the disaster.”²³ They know that the way the world is organized will make people angry, they just want to know that in the end people will go back to work. Sometimes periods of revolt come with a change in consciousness; the System is seen as the source of the problem and not simply an issue of the individual or another person, (the immigrant, the unionized worker, the unemployed, the homeless, or the person receiving state benefits). Other times, revolt takes place in the wake of something like a police killing and happens in a flash, but always when enough people feel like they can go out into the streets and make something happen. Dissent can be seen brewing in seemingly individual ways, such as mass absenteeism at work, school truancy, even rising shoplifting rates. However, when things reach a boiling point is when people come together and begin to act collectively. This is the most important aspect of the Occupy-era struggles across the world; they were based on a real desire for human connection, community, and togetherness that punched through the spectacle of modern life to find a common humanity on the other side. But beyond looking back on the days of wild community and resistance of 2011 and 2012, we have to understand that the State is already gearing up for the next clash. It is already preparing itself to make sure that another Occupy never happens again. We have to realize the very real threat of counter-insurgency and work to overcome it through our relationships, projects, and the spaces that we operate out of.

Understanding the history of this country and the struggles that have come before us is part of that process. The historic movements of Labor and Civil Rights have to be seen in a new light. It was disruption and self-activity often labeled as violent, disorganized, and spontaneous that won concessions, and it was the organizations which grew out of that disruption which in turn blunted that militancy. At the same time, control over social movements

by official organizations has led to worse conditions for those who official groups try to represent and manage. With a lack of fear of a militant fight-back, the elites are free and open to attack broad sections of the population. As I write this, politicians are debating to slash billions in money for food stamps, a program that in part was created to quell urban rioting. Grasping this history allows us to look at “violence” and “disruption” in a whole new light and proceed toward understanding coming clashes. But we can’t just sit and wait for the next eruption. We build networks, our capacity, resources, and our confidence now. We push the tensions and seemingly small fights with authority and power in the day to day, so when moments of open conflict do hit, more people are ready for a larger shift.

People will continue to find each other. They will be brought together by not only material conditions but also a changing consciousness of their place in the world. Some are starting to see the established methods of change—the ballot box, the letter to the editor, and polite protest—doing nothing to affect the current state of affairs. What we do with this reality is up to us. We are in for some terrible times and a lot of hard work. We have to begin to meet, talk, and organize with people we work with, live next to, and come into contact with daily. This will be hard because we are not used to working together in this way. The State will continue to assault us and our movements. People will go to jail on frame-ups, get fired from work, and be attacked brutally at demonstrations. We will soon hit a point again such as in the 1960s, where the State will again start killing people in resistance movements. As we become more powerful, the State will move against us even harder.

BACK IN BLOC

As we continue into the present period, the appearance of black blocs, or simply anonymous confrontational collective activity in social struggles and tensions, will not cease—they will continue across the world (as the recent use of blocs in Egypt, Mexico, and Brazil 24 show). Working class self-activity, as it comes into conflict with the State and its police forces, will continue to look increasingly like black bloc activity. The recent struggles in Brazil show a clear turning point, with a major teachers union coming out in “unconditional support of the black bloc” in their defense of protesters from police during street clashes. 25 At the same time, more and more of those engaging in such tactics will care more about defending territory and neighborhoods than breaking the windows of a bank.

More and more, riots and full-blown rebellions will be a recurring response to police violence and repression; collective acts of rebellion will become more conflictual and seek ways to stay anonymous. For revolutionaries, we must seek to deepen these situations to make them more subversive, and connect the seemingly disconnected nodes of class struggle that exist. 26 We will not be able to call for the day in which the halls of power are stormed, but we can create the affinities and relationships which can help us maneuver in the coming terrain.

This book is not about working within the system. It isn't about asking those in power for anything. It's about what happens when people break down the door and walk in to the wide and frightening world of open revolt. It is about the glorious moments in the streets that we control. You will find many recurring themes within these pages. When things do pop off, there will always be groups and individuals ready with a wet blanket to put out the fires before they spread. The State will always have one hand ready to smash and the other open to dialogue. There will always be those on the side-lines screaming "violence!" as a way of distraction. As we go through these events from the Student Movement, Occupy, and anti-fascist actions, hopefully we can learn from both ideological and practical clashes and prepare for the battles yet to arrive. What happens in the years to come may prove to be pivotal in human history.

AFTERWARD

FOR OVER 100 YEARS ANARCHISTS

have been hunted and imprisoned, arrested and tortured, rounded up to be deported, slandered and betrayed, placed as youths into detention facilities and 'rehabilitation centers,' snatched on and sold-out by activists and union bosses, assassinated by snipers and murdered by police. Militants within our movement have suffered at the hands of capitalists, fascists, and Communists and we have filled prisons, immigrant detention centers, concentration camps, and gulags.

But anarchists have never, never been victims. We too have been assassins. We have been the murderers of kings, captains of industry, and Presidents. We have picked the locks of wealthy business owners to fund our publications and have scammed millions of dollars in photocopies. We have armed ourselves with pistols to protect strikes. We have formed militias and armed columns of women and men to defend ourselves and our liberated territory from the Ukraine to Mexico, just as we have formed crews of

queers to attack homophobes. We exist in agrarian communes in Chiapas, Mexico where we carry on the ideals of the insurrectionary Ricardo Flores Magon as well as the urban squats of Europe and we defend both with guns and Molotov cocktails. We have taken over campus buildings in California and defended gardens in New York City. We were the first to unionize Starbucks as well as the first to decry the mainstream unions for what they are, a police force for the working class. We support our prisoners, be it with benefit concerts or jailbreaks.

By the time I was 18, I learned what it meant to don the ski mask and stand with my friends and comrades in the streets to face down the police. I discovered the power that comes in placing oneself in danger and knowing that the only way to avoid a criminal record, a beating or worse from the authorities, and possible jail time lays in my physical abilities and especially the solidarity and support of those around me. I learned what it meant to stay loyal to a group of people I had affinity with.

This book has been for everyone who shares the intimacy of the sound of hammers against the property of the rich. Those that have lived through riots. Who have stood in stores being looted. Who have walked in universities they could never afford to attend while they were being occupied. Who have camped on land reclaimed by indigenous people who spoke of their ancestors and welcomed us as comrades. Who have seen fire.

It is with these words that I leave you, unsure of where the tides of history will take us. My biggest fear with this book is that the reader will take away from it that revolutionary action only happens in specific, spectacular moments. You can't plan for it and you can't expect it, it just happens. As my good friend anarchist historian Barry Pateman once told me, "One thing we know for sure, is that shit will always hit the fan." Capitalism will create crisis as long as it exists. It will create the material conditions that will cause some people to resist it. But will people see their resistance as part of a push towards a new way of life or as simply a way to blow off steam? Perhaps they see their actions as simply an effort to make the system more fair? For revolutionaries, one of our first tasks is to come to these struggles and make people realize that the symptoms within capitalism will always exist as long as capitalism does. Anarchism is based on the idea that regular people should put faith in nothing other than their own abilities to come together to solve problems and create solutions. We have to popularize this and bring it to struggles as they unfold.

Reading through these essays, we find over and over

again similar concepts, problems, and ideas. The Left will always try to contain revolt; official organizations will try to manage self-organized and grassroots groups to co-opt them back into the political system. The State will always have a two-pronged assault of brutal repression and destabilization of resistance. This will happen through State promotion of dialogue within accepted channels; misinformation and fear through the media; and funneling money into non-profits to compete with the insurgency for the hearts and minds of the population. While some of these things are not new, we are certainly in a new era of policing and statecraft, which views the entire population as potential insurgents and thus uses counter-insurgency to combat even potential rebellion.

If resistance movements are to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the public, our work cannot be confined to the moment of the riot or the occupation of a building. In between these moments of open conflict we have to begin to build connections, networks, and associations with people in our workplaces, schools, and neighborhoods.

We have to be able to organize and struggle around daily issues and build up our confidence to work together, fight, and win. We must have the space to talk with people and expand our ideas on the nature of this system, in order to create new forms of life and new ways of relating to each other and the land itself. The work we do between moments of high conflict may be just as, if not more, important as those moments in the thick of it.

We must continue to promote the idea of a different world after capitalism and the State; we cannot solely focus on the negative outcomes of revolt. Society is not simply a heap of dry wood that we are just waiting to spark. There have always been riots and revolt since the start of class society, but without a desire for a different world most people simply enact their anger, then go home and back to work.

As I write this, the Oakland City Council has decided to begin construction of the Domain Awareness Center. Such a facility will process and store surveillance information from a variety of cameras, use facial recognition technology, log license plates and filter social media. Police are already pushing for access to drones in the Bay Area for use in fighting crime and monitoring protests. All of these things have vast political and social ramifications. Reading the headlines of even the mainstream news, we hear again and again how the NSA is spying on everyday Americans. Accessing information through Angry Birds and reading emails. This government is not legitimate nor is it neutral—it is our enemy.

At the same time, the Bay Area is in the middle of a renaissance of non-profits organizations. Fresh-faced young people from around the country, many white and from upper-middle-class backgrounds, flock here every year to get involved in a non-profit that will help “save the world.” There’s nothing wrong with much of the work these groups do; many of their projects came out of social struggles and grassroots campaigns. But these things are not divorced from the framework of counter-insurgency. People in communities hardest hit by capitalism are now seeing white grad students financed by the Ford Foundation and the State do the work previously done by the Black Panthers and anarchists from their own neighborhoods, who have now been evicted, killed, or jailed. The State is then free to move in and create relationships with people who would most benefit from its overthrow. We face a brutality that wishes to see us dead from a ruling-class that is smart enough to prop up a fake resistance to the problems it has created.

Some people in France wrote in a call to arms, “The desert cannot grow anymore: it is everywhere. But it can still deepen. Faced with the evidence of the catastrophe, there are those who get indignant and those who take note, those who denounce and those who get organized. We are among those who get organized.” History will show just how serious we are.